

DOCKET NO.: MSFT-0513 (125304.2)
Application No.: 09/515,037
Office Action Dated: October 1, 2003

PATENT
REPLY FILED UNDER EXPEDITED
PROCEDURE PURSUANT TO
37 CFR § 1.116

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

As a preliminary matter, applicant would like to thank Examiner Fleurantin for the courtesy of the recent teleconferences regarding this matter. Applicant looks forward to communicating with the examiner again, upon examination of this after-final amendment, to expedite prosecution and to bring prompt resolution of this case.

Also, applicant continues to note that the examiner has not acknowledged a claim of priority under 35 USC § 119(e) in the office action summary, and requests that the examiner provide the acknowledgement in the next official action.

After entry of this amendment, claims 1, 3-8, 10, 12-16, 38-39, 42, and 44-51 (a total of 24 claims) are pending in the application. In this response and amendment, claims 2, 9, 11, 40-41, and 43 are cancelled (claims 17-37 were previously canceled), and claims 1, 6, 8, 13, 15, 38, and 42 are amended.

In the final office action dated March 14, 2003, the examiner rejects claims 1-5, 8-16, 37, 43-51 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Chou, et al., "A Unifying Framework for Version Control in a CAD Environment, Aug. 1998 ("Chou"), and rejects claims 6, 7, and 38-42 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Chou.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 102(b)

The examiner rejects claims 1-5, 8-16, 37, 43-51 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Chou, et al., "A Unifying Framework for Version Control in a CAD Environment, Aug. 1998 ("Chou"). Applicant respectfully traverses the examiner's rejections, as Chou does not disclose each and every element of claims 1-5, 8-16, 37, 43-51 of the present invention.

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For instance, Chou does not disclose or teach, among other things, a method for updating a version of an object having a property, where a start version field in an object table is set to a value representing a successor version of the object, an end version field in the object table is set to a value representing a most recent version of the object, and a property value field that is set to an updated value for a property, where the property is a piece of data of the object, and where the start version field and the end version field define a range of versions for which the value of the property is the same.

A claim is anticipated under 35 USC § 102(b) only if each and every element set forth in the claim is disclosed (i.e., identically described) in a single prior art reference. The object table (i.e., version or component table) of Chou teaches a default version number, a next version number, and version descriptors, one for each version on the version-derivation hierarchy of the object. In Chou, the default version number determines which existing version should be chosen when a partially specified reference is dynamically bound. The next version number is the version number to be assigned to the next version created, and the version descriptors contain control information for each version, namely version identification information and pointer or binding information (see p. 341-342, sections 6.1 and 6.2).

Chou does not disclose, teach, or suggest an object table having a start version field, an end version field, and a property value field that is set to an updated value for a property, where the property is a piece of data of the object (not an identifier for a version of the object placed in a list or table), and where the start version field and the end version field define a range of versions for which the value of the property is the same. The examiner refers, in paragraph 3 of the office action, to the inverted references list of Chou as disclosing the

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setting of a property value field to an updated value. However, the inverted references list of Chou includes the names of various versions of an object so that owners are notified when a version is updated. The inverted reference list includes information such as version names, the type of updating event, and the notification method. Accordingly, the inverted reference list of Chou does not include a start version field, an end version field, and a property value field that includes an actual property value, where the property is a piece of data of the object, so that the start version field and the end version field define a range of versions for which the value of the property is the same.

In fact, the examiner acknowledges that Chou does not disclose a start version field and an end version field that define a range of versions of an object identified by another field that have a property value provided in still another field (see office action paragraph 4, page 9, lines 5-7).

Accordingly, based upon the examiner's statement (at page 9, lines 5-7), and based upon the fact that each pending independent claim (i.e., claims 1, 6, 8, 13, and 15) recites an object table having a start version field, an end version field, and a property value field that is set to an updated value for a property, where the property is a piece of data of the object, and where the start version field and the end version field define a range of versions for which the value of the property is the same, applicant respectfully requests that the examiner withdraw all §102 rejections.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 103

Claims 6, 7, and 38-42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Chou, et al., "A Unifying Framework for Version Control in a CAD Environment, Aug. 1998 ("Chou"). The examiner states that, although Chou does not explicitly disclose wherein the

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second and third field define a range of versions of an object identified by the first field having the property value in the fourth field, Chou discloses a default version number and a next version number in which a version count and a set of version descriptors, one for each existing version on the version-derivation hierarchy of the object. The examiner believes it therefore obvious to modify the teachings of Chou wherein the second and third field define a range of versions of an object identified by the first field having the property value in the fourth field to allow the teachings of Chou to improve the accuracy and the reliability of the versions and workspaces in an object repository, and provide user to specify a particular version on the version derivation hierarchy.

Applicant respectfully traverses the examiners rejection under 35 USC § 103(a), as applicant denies that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has been established. Applicant contends that the examiner's statement is conclusory without justification existing in Chou to substantiate a § 103 rejection. For instance, the present invention is not limited to improving the accuracy and reliability of the versions and workspaces in an object repository, nor just to allow a user to specify a particular version on the version derivation hierarchy. The present invention provides for efficient versioning of objects in a repository, providing versioning capabilities not possible and not taught or suggested in Chou. The present invention provides that object properties and relationships are only copied when necessary (e.g., only when a property value in a particular object has changed). In lieu of copying objects, the present invention maintains a range of versions for which the property value is the same. Chou does not teach or suggest these aspects, as Chou is admittedly directed to version creation and manipulation, version naming and binding, and version change notification. Accordingly, it would not be obvious to modify Chou to meet the present invention.

The question raised under 35 U.S.C. §103 is whether the reference(s) taken as a whole would suggest the claimed invention taken as a whole to one of ordinary skill in the art. Some reason must be given in the reference(s) why one of ordinary skill would have been prompted to modify the teachings of the reference(s) to arrive at the claimed invention.

Regarding object tables (e.g., version or component tables), Chou teaches that the default version number determines which existing version on the version-derivation hierarchy should be chosen when a partially specified reference is dynamically bound, and that the next-version number is the version number to be assigned to the next version of the object that will be created, with version descriptors that include control information for each version, such as version number of the version and the parent, change notification and approval timestamps, storage location, schema version numbers, and pointers. Again, Chou teaches version creation and manipulation, and version naming, binding and change notification. Therefore, Chou does not teach or suggest doing what applicant has done in the present invention. One cannot base obviousness upon what a person skilled in the art might try or might find obvious to try but rather must consider what the reference would have led a person skilled in the art to do.

Furthermore, in the present invention, the propagation of relationships to a new version is controlled by a data model. A flag on the relationship is used to determine whether or not a particular relationship should be copied. These aspects are also neither taught nor suggested in Chou. Chou focuses on notifying users when versions have been updated.

Also, when evaluating a claim for obviousness, all limitations of the claim must be evaluated. The examiner cannot ignore material, claimed limitations absent from the

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reference(s). As discussed, the examiner acknowledges recitations present in the independent claims of the present invention that are omitted from the reference.

For the foregoing reasons, applicant contends that a prima facie case of obvious has not been established to substantiate a § 103 rejection, as Chou fails to show incentive, motivation, or suggestion for the present invention, and fails to disclose all of the elements recited in the claims of the present invention.

While applicant believes the previously presented claims are distinguishable over the prior art, and are thereby allowable, applicant requests entry of the amendments included herein to expedite prosecution of the present application. Accordingly, applicant reserves the right to continue prosecution of any/all of the previously presented claims in a continuing application.

CONCLUSION

In light of the above amendments and remarks, applicant submits that pending claims 1, 3-8, 10, 12-16, 38-39, 42, and 44-51 (a total of 24 claims) are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests that examiner issue an early notice of allowance.

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